

# Appearance on the Positively Pro Wrestling Podcast

I recently got to be a guest on a fairly new show with the idea of being positive instead of bashing everything WWE does. We're talking about Wrestlemania experiences and I talk about what it was like being at Wrestlemania XXX and XXXII. The host is a very smart guy and it was a lot of fun to be on the show. Check it out.

<https://soundcloud.com/ppw-podcast/ppw-episode-8-wrestlemania-memories-wrestlemania-30-and-32>

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## Best of 2016: Worst Major Show of the Year

Let's move on to the far more entertaining part of these things: the bad side. There's less to cover here but we're going to start with one of the big ones: the Worst Major Show of the Year. WWE is notorious for being able to put on some horrible shows and today we're going to look at what their absolute worst of the year really was. I know some of these might not be the worst shows but they're the worst options available. These are in no particular order, as usual.

### 1. Tables Ladders and Chairs

We'll start with one of the last major shows of the year as we look at "Smackdown Live's" last offering. This is always an odd show because it's almost all about the gimmicks and the violence. The problem with that is it forces a lot of matches into gimmicks that

really don't need to exist in the first place. For instance, was there any reason for Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin to be a chairs match other than the show required that one exist?

It also didn't help that most of the matches were just ok at best. The main event (AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose in the show's namesake match for the Smackdown World Title) was by far the best thing about the show but it really wasn't strong enough to make up for a rather lackluster show. That tends to be the case with this show almost every year and that's not a good thing.

"Tables Ladders and Chairs 2016" was a watchable enough show but that doesn't mean it's a show that needs to exist. I've never been a fan of having these shows because the calendar says so and it's rarely proven to work. On top of that, the use of these gimmick matches on a single show weakens those gimmicks later on in the year. We can't have a TLC match when the show calls for it other than there's one at the end of the year just because it's December. That doesn't make sense and it almost never works.

## **2. Payback**

I went back and forth on this one for a long time but the more I thought about it, the more I thought of the annoying decisions and how many of them I have to sit through today. This was the show where we had a Natalya vs. Charlotte match end in a Montreal Screwjob reference for the sake of keeping the title on a Flair. I mean, ignore the fact that IT WAS NINETEEN YEARS AGO and add in the fact that it was for another Charlotte vs. Natalya match when the fans were begging for Sasha Banks.

Other than that we had what should have been the layup of the summer with Cesaro winning the Intercontinental Title from Miz. The champ tapped but AGAIN WWE found a way to avoid giving Cesaro a big win for the sake of....well to be fair Miz keeping the title wasn't the worst thing in the world but it really should have been Cesaro getting the title for a change.

Now, that being said, there were two Match of the Year candidates on the show and that should have been enough to make the show great. However, those two big issues are just enough to pull it down to the lower levels of the shows this year. It might not be the worst but those two decisions were so annoying that they took so much of my enjoyment away from the rest of the show.

### **3. Fastlane**

Now we're getting somewhere. Fastlane wasn't anything interesting in 2015 and that's the case again with "Fastlane 2016". They might as well just call the show "Filler 2016" or "Annual Car Themed Show" and it would be just about the same. Most of the wrestling went nowhere and the main event only confirmed the obvious "Wrestlemania XXXII" main event that we all knew was coming.

If the triple threat between Roman Reigns, Dean Ambrose and Brock Lesnar wasn't clear enough, we also had a live interview with Edge and Christian talking to New Day (which was nowhere near as funny as you might expect) and Curtis Axel vs. R-Truth on a pay per view. Is that really the best you can do on a three hour pay per view? A lot of the wrestling was tolerable but really, this just didn't need to exist.

That sums up "Fastlane 2016" as perfectly as anything else could: the show didn't need to exist. Stephanie basically made the main event on a whim and that made it illogical to go along with the fact that it wasn't really interesting. The show was watchable but pay per views really should be more than just filler, which is all "Fastlane 2016" really was.

### **4. Roadblock: End of the Line**

This is a show that really isn't going to age well and I'm not really surprised. Overall, this show really didn't need to exist and I think everyone knew it. The biggest problem here, as is the case so often on "Monday Night Raw", is the lack of interest in the main event. The wrestling itself was fine with Kevin Owens defending against Reigns being fine but absolutely nothing interesting whatsoever.

The problem really boils down to the fact that nothing feels special. It's not a show that I'm ever going to want to watch again and that's rarely a good sign. I spent most of the show waiting on it to end and only enjoyed parts of it because some of the wrestling was good. This really is a case where the individual parts don't add up to the whole score which doesn't fill you with hope.

Finally, there's the name. Was there really no other name available than Roadblock, which already took place back in February? Come up with any generic name (Vengeance, No Way Out, Over the Limit etc) and forget this whole obsession with car names. They hammer the idea

in well enough and then have such a boring build that the show is only good in spite of its card. That's really not too good.

## **5. Backlash**

"Smackdown Live" started having its own pay per view as well and for the most part the show was spent crowning new champions. The entire roster was basically brand new and starting from scratch, meaning they had almost nothing going on coming in. Ambrose was the Smackdown World Champion but wound up losing the belt to Styles in the only really good match of the night.

Aside from that, the Usos wrestled twice, Kane defeated Bray Wyatt and Dolph Ziggler managed to lose another match, which was apparently even more important than his World Title shot back at "Summerslam 2016". You really could have accomplished most of these things on a few major episodes of "Smackdown Live" instead of doing all of it on one pay per view, but they didn't have much else to use to fill in a pay per view.

You could probably attribute a lot of the issues on the show to not having enough time to really establish things before getting to a pay per view. Then again, that's how so much works in WWE: it doesn't matter what's going on in the stories because it's all about getting things going as quickly as possible. If that means the pay per view doesn't need to exist and suffers as a result, so be it.

## **6. Wrestlemania XXXII**

Oh boy we had to get to this one eventually. Where do I even start with this one? Ah well how about with the run time? If you take away the two hour pre-show, this was still a nearly five hour wrestling show and that's WAY too long. This problem came from the simple fact of having too much crammed onto the show. Be it Rock taking nine minutes to get to the ring, Undertaker vs. Shane McMahon taking half an hour (not even counting entrances and post match stuff) or the main event going twenty seven minutes in front of a worn out crowd, this was too long of a show.

The build wasn't great either and a lot of that is due to injuries. It's fairly clear that the big Undertaker match was supposed to be against Cena but, due to the injuries up and down the card, the best we could get was McMahon. Now, in theory, that match probably shouldn't have gone half an hour but then McMahon doesn't get to do his big dive off the cage and that just wouldn't be any fun.

The show is much more disappointing than bad but that's still covering quite a bit of ground. The biggest show of the year shouldn't feel like a never ending night of boredom with matches seemingly ending with a main goal of making the audience wonder what the WWE is thinking. That was the case with Styles vs. Jericho (which I've lightened up on) and New Day vs. League of Nations, which really isn't how things should be going. It's not a good show and that's much more due to being boring than bad, which is often even worse.

## **7. Survivor Series**

This is another case of the main event being all that people are going to remember and in this situation, I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not. I've thought about Goldberg vs. Lesnar a lot now and I'm really not sure what it really means. I don't know if I should be mad about it or not but I know it made an impact. Unfortunately, when the main thing people remember about your show is a match lasting ninety seconds, there's a lot left to be desired.

The other problem is how unbalanced this show really felt. You had the men's Survivor Series match lasting nearly an hour while the tag team and women's versions felt like they were rushed out there because we needed to fill in time elsewhere. The big match is still good but it took up so much time from everything else and that's not a good thing.

Overall, this show is all over the place and unfortunately that doesn't pan out all that well. It's definitely one of the weaker shows of the year and when your show is approaching five hours counting the pre-show (those thinks are way too pesky) with ninety seconds basically defining the entire thing, there's almost no way for it to really work. The show is a pretty big mess with an infamous main event which overshadows all the good, leaving it pretty low on the WWE charts.

## **8. Bound For Glory**

It just wouldn't be right if I didn't put a TNA show on here and while it's still a stretch to call anything TNA does major, this is about as good as it's going to get. The problem here isn't so much that anything is bad but much more along the lines of it's just kind of there. You know, much like almost everything else TNA does.

As is far too often the case in TNA, Bound For Glory just kind of

came and went without anything of note going on. I had to look back at the review to remember anything about it, including the main event. That's a really bad sign for TNA when the show was just a few months ago. The Great War was good enough and a big spectacle but that doesn't mean the match was, you know, good.

I'm really not sure what else there is to say about this show. Like, what else even happened here? The World Title didn't change hands in a mostly Impact level main event. The X-Division Title match was good but, again, really nothing worst checking out. Like I said, for the biggest show of the year, that's really not a good sign.

It's not a good sign that I had to keep dropping nominees from the list because they really weren't all that bad. Really, there are only a few options to really pick from here and there's only one major option: "Wrestlemania XXXII". The show is a glorified disaster with barely any standout matches and a horrible aftertaste in many of the fans' mouths. When fans are leaving the show early to watch the ending of the show on the WWE Network, it's clear that you're doing something very wrong.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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## Picked Up Post-Wrestlemania

# Raw/Smackdown Tickets

They're doing a combo deal next year so I could get tickets for both shows in one shot. Also, Orlando has gone WAY better than Dallas so far as I paid 150 for a nosebleed seat at Wrestlemania XXXII and now I've got upper deck for XXXIII, Raw and Smackdown for 193. Indy shows/Axxess tickets upcoming.

As usual, thank you all for letting me be able to do this. You're basically paying for this stuff (well, along with the wife needing to find something for Christmas/my birthday) and it's the most fun I can have as a wrestling fan.

KB

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## New Column: The Kevin Owens and Triple H and Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns Show

A column about the last five minutes of Raw.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-kevin-owens-and-triple-h-and-seth-rollins-and-roman-reigns-show/>

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# The Roman Reigns Problem, Now Featuring Seth Rollins

Kind of a bonus column this week.

So this past Sunday at Extreme Rules, Seth Rollins made his return and attacked WWE World Champion Roman Reigns, seemingly becoming the new top face to take down the rapidly heel turning Reigns. However, the next night on Raw, it was clear that Rollins was in fact still heel and Reigns was in fact still the big dog face that fans are getting very tired of in a hurry. Today we're going to take a quick look at why this continues to make people scratch their heads.

Let's get this out of the way first: Roman Reigns has an audience. Allegedly he's rather handsome and there's something about his arms and hair that appeals to women. If you read most house show results, Reigns gets one of the loudest pops of the night but for some reason that doesn't translate to TV. You can claim that it's the new cool thing to do (which I can completely buy) or whatever, but the fact of the matter is that these reactions are happening and there's no way around them at the moment.

Reigns has a big value to WWE. He has a good look, he can more than hold his own in the ring and he's getting better on the mic. I don't think anyone would suggest that he's worthless or doesn't belong in WWE and if they did, they're just flat out wrong. However, there's a difference between having a spot on the card and having THE spot.

Here's the thing: there's not much that sets Reigns apart. Yeah he has a good look but so do a lot of people. Yeah he can wrestle a good match but others can do it better. Yeah his talking is improving but that's still not saying much given how bad it was in the first place. Reigns is better than he used to be and has improved by leaps and bounds from just a year ago but he's still



missing the big thing: a connection.

Why should I care about Roman Reigns? After everything he's said and done over the years, I have no reason to feel a connection to him. He debuted as part of this elite group where he almost never talked, then became the monster of the team who set a bunch of records and finally became the top dog after the team split, leading to his main event run where he kept beating up everyone in sight because HE IS THE CHOSEN ONE. We don't really have a reason for him getting this spot but he's getting it, he's winning the title at Wrestlemania and there's nothing that's changing that because it's been decided months in advance.

In other words, Reigns is basically Superman: he barely has any weaknesses and he's better than you because everyone is beneath him. There's no personality there and it makes for some really dull exchanges and feuds because Reigns is just going to win no matter what happens. How am I supposed to get interested in something like that?

This is why someone like Daniel Bryan worked. While he was very talented in the ring, he faced a lot of adversity and was held down because of his size, look etc. How many times did you hear the Authority tell him that he didn't have any right to be near the World Title because he belonged somewhere else? In other words, WWE set it up so that people WANTED to see Bryan get this spot. Compare this to Reigns where it was more "Reigns is awesome and is getting the title. You like him!"

Now let's jump back to Rollins. Seth has been presented as the smart one of the Shield, often being referred to as the Architect and an all around mastermind who keeps figuring out a way to escape, normally with the title at the same time. Rollins never lost the World Title and had a reason to immediately challenge his old nemesis Reigns. It helps that Rollins can wrestle one of the most exciting in ring styles of anyone on the roster. This really should have been one of the biggest and easiest layups that WWE could do for a very long time.

And then they just didn't do it. Rollins came out on Raw last night acting like a face and then went right back to heeling it up on the audience, no matter what the fans were begging to see. At the end of the day, a lot of the fans want to see something else on top of the company. Whether or not that's Rollins isn't what matters. What matters is that Reigns just is not working as the undisputed face of the company.

But for some reason that only Vince himself can explain, we're getting Roman Reigns as the star of the company. Now a lot of these problems could be changed by a big heel turn, which really seems like what a lot of the fans want to see. I have no idea what WWE is waiting for as there's an army of names ready to challenge a heel Reigns (imagine Sami Zayn as the underdog vs. the big dog for the title) but this is what we're stuck with whether we like it or not.

Rollins is just another name added to that list. The fans were more than ready to cheer him before he got hurt and then they had the face turn set up for them even stronger than before Rollins was hurt. I can more than accept the idea that Rollins is a better heel than a face but this is another case of someone who looks ready to be the good to Reigns' bad, only to have it be the same thing all over again.

At this point Reigns is just in a really weird place. Look back at the AJ Styles feud and tell me who I was supposed to cheer for there. Anderson and Gallows were certainly acting like heels while AJ was getting more aggressive but the Usos lost their big face entrance and generally acted exactly the same way as the newcomers. I really wasn't sure who I was supposed to be for in that feud as Reigns continues to act like a tweener/heel while being presented as the undisputed top face of the company.

So what can be done about all this? I really have no idea. Basically we're stuck in this same holding pattern of the fans rejecting Reigns as this star until he either changes things up a lot (read as a heel turn to make him the guy that everyone wants to boo) or Vince changes his mind. Really at this point it seems that Reigns is at

the top because Vince says so and that's just not going to work for the fans who have rejected him.

The worst part of this is that a lot of the criticism can't be placed on Reigns. It wasn't him that set up this push or had him walk out of the Royal Rumble for half an hour (What was that anyway? Of all the things they could do like having him taken out on a stretcher or just left him there unconscious, they had him get on his feet and walk to the back like a heel. Who thought that was a good idea?) or give the main event of Wrestlemania twenty seven minutes.

Let's talk about that match for a second. What could they possibly have been thinking there? After the show had already gone on for six hours, we got a Mad Max style speech from Stephanie which can be loosely translated as "BOO US! WE'RE EVIL!" to try and get the fans away from booing Reigns out of Texas. As you might have guessed, this really didn't work because that's not what the fans wanted to see.

Then the fans were treated to a match that ran nearly half an hour with a meaningless story of working on a shoulder and capped off by a spear to give Reigns the title (again). Yeah I'm not sure why this third title reign is supposed to be more interesting than the other two times where he won the title clean but apparently this is a much bigger deal.

In that whole big mess of a match, there was one moment that changed the whole thing. At one point, Reigns went for a spear on HHH but hit Stephanie instead. The entire audience suddenly went insane and wanted to cheer him because he did something the fans wanted to see. Stephanie had been the most annoying character in the company for years but never got anything that was coming to her. Then Reigns cut her in half with a spear and he was the most popular thing in the company (for all of five minutes).

This isn't even the first time this has happened. At TLC 2015, Reigns was up against ridiculous odds as he had to face the League of Nations and the Authority at the same time. There was a moment

where Reigns just started firing off Superman Punch after Superman Punch to keep the League at bay as long as he could. It made him feel like a superhero and again, the crowd ate it up and treated Reigns like WWE wants him to be treated. Then Sheamus retained the title anyway because that's what WWE felt was the right idea.

After the match, Reigns completely snapped and annihilated HHH with a bunch of power moves and a powerbomb onto but not through the table (because we needed one more moment to define Reigns' career). Again, this worked PERFECTLY as the fans wanted to see Reigns break away from this mold that he had been stuck in and just act like a 6'4 monster with insane power and some good natural charisma. You know, EXACTLY WHAT MADE HIM COOL WHEN HE WAS IN THE SHIELD. Things got even better the next night when Reigns beat the heck out of Sheamus, Superman Punched Vince in the face and won the title clean.

But after all that and all the face pops we got as a result, it was HHH winning the title at the Royal Rumble, setting up the mess of a title match. All the while, Reigns was back to his cookie cutter self that people didn't want to see but WWE had decided they knew how Reigns should be pushed and the crowd didn't know what they really wanted.

That's where we are now: Reigns has the tools to make the fans cheer him (or boo the heck out of him) but instead WWE is still having him tread water as a lukewarm face while the booing gets louder and louder. There's an army of names waiting to face him (AJ Styles, Sami Zayn, Cesaro, a bunch of people in NXT and I could probably go on) but instead it's the same Rollins vs. Reigns feud that we've seen before (they used to be in the Shield together you know).

Reigns has a big future in front of him and at age 30 (31 tomorrow), he's going to be around for a very long time. I have no idea why WWE is insisting on pushing him this way but as soon as he turns heel (or does something that people want to see), he's going to explode on WWE and be a much bigger deal. Until then though, this is going to be the same kind of thing we're stuck with for months because WWE has decided that's what we're getting. Rollins is just the latest

name on a long list of people that the fans want to see take out Reigns but nah, let's just keep going with what hasn't worked because that's what Vince wants.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on NXT: The Full Sail Years Volume II at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01FWZZ2UA>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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## **New Column: There's More To It Than That**

Looking at how Raw has been better lately despite a lot of things being the same.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-theres-more-to-it-than-that/>

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## **Wrestlemania XXXII: Strap Yourselves In. This Is A**

# Long One.

## Wrestlemania XXXII

Date: April 3, 2016

Location: AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas

Attendance: 101,763

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

America the Beautiful: Fifth Harmony

We've finally arrived at what might be the biggest show of all time. The attendance record is going to be set tonight (it just is) and the card is.....well did I mention that attendance? Yeah the build to this one hasn't been all that great with a double main event of Roman Reigns challenging HHH for the WWE World Title and Undertaker vs. Shane McMahon inside the Cell with Undertaker's future at Wrestlemania vs. Shane controlling Raw on the line in a story that stops making sense as soon as you start thinking about it too much. Let's get to it.

Again I was in the stadium for this so it's my second time seeing the show but first time seeing the produced version.

The stadium looks nothing short of amazing, despite being mostly empty for the pre-show due to a lot of issues with getting people inside.

### Pre-Show: US Title: Kalisto vs. Ryback

Kalisto is defending in this basic big guy vs. little guy feud. We get a nice tale of the tape with Ryback having 4.5 shoe sizes and more than double the bench press. The GOLDBERG chants begin at the bell and Kalisto isn't sure how to start. A headlock proves to be a really bad idea as Ryback launches him away and easily sends him outside for a crash.

Kalisto comes back in with something like a top rope bulldog for two, followed by a nice fake out on a dive to set up double knees off the apron. Ryback will have none of that and LAUNCHES Kalisto into the air for a big crash as we take a break. Back with Ryback

getting two off something we don't see and a hard back elbow to the jaw gets the same. A running sitout powerslam gets the third straight near fall but Ryback gets a bit too cocky on a very delayed superplex, allowing Kalisto to turn it into a cross body for two.

The champ's hurricanrana driver gets the same and there's the corkscrew cross body for good measure. A hard slam has Kalisto in trouble so he tries to head to the corner, only to be pulled back with the turnbuckle pad coming off. You can see the ending coming from here as Kalisto sends him head first into the exposed buckle, setting up the Salida Del Sol for the pin to retain at 8:53.

**Rating:** C+. Really good choice for the opener here as they did everything they needed to do to get the crowd (well what little crowd they had) going. It's such a simple idea to have someone smaller beat a big strong guy and they didn't try to over think things out there. The ending might have been a bit of a stretch but at least Ryback keeps a bit of face after the loss. He needs to win something eventually though and I'm really not wild on having the title match on the pre-show.

#### Pre-Show: Total Divas vs. Bad and Blonde

This would be Brie Bella/Alicia Fox/Paige/Eva Marie/Natalya vs. Lana/Naomi/Summer Rae/Tamina/Emma in a match with no story worth mentioning because these things never have stories of note. Summer elbows Alicia in the face to start before getting two off a DDT. A tag to Emma draws all ten of them in for a huge staredown as we take a break. Back with Eva coming in to some horrible booing to face Emma. A not bad headscissors puts Emma down but Eva slaps Natalya hard on the shoulder instead of tagging Paige.

It's quickly off to Naomi for those stupid dancing kicks but Paige comes in to play Bret to Natalya's Anvil in a Hart Attack. Naomi misses a cross body and crashes into the ropes but still tags Emma back in for a wheelbarrow suplex. We finally get the tag to Lana, who started this whole thing by insulting Brie Bella. Somehow we wound up with this instead of whatever they were going for there and that's probably best for everyone. Lana wrestling with her hair down

and wearing basically a one piece swimsuit isn't bad for anyone either.

Paige gets kicked down and Lana mocks the YES chants before bringing Tamina in. A lot of spot calling results in a broken up Tower of Doom and Paige diving onto the pile for a big crash. There's still no hot tag though as Emma keeps Paige in the corner and stomps away. Paige finally gets away from Naomi and makes the hot tag to Brie as everything breaks down.

We get the parade of finishers (including Eva's Sliced Bread #2 being booed halfway out of Texas) until the BRIE MODE knee is blocked by Naomi's raised boot. The split legged moonsault hits mat (called a knee by Byron), allowing Brie to grab the arm and roll forward into the YES Lock (that looked awesome) for the submission at 11:25.

**Rating:** D. What were you expecting here? It was a huge mess with a bunch of women who have no idea how to do anything besides spots and barely being able to do those. This probably would have been better as a four person tag or even better as a match between Brie and Lana so there could be an actual story. Lana was fine in the little bit she was in the ring, but you know she's a long term project. This was little more than a way to get them on the card though and that's fine all around.

Post match Nikki Bella comes out in ring gear and a neck brace for the big return celebration because we're supposed to cheer for Nikki and be impressed because of her injury.

Here's Lita to talk about the history of women's wrestling and to unveil the new Women's Title belt which will be awarded to the winner of tonight's triple threat. Also of note: she calls them superstars instead of Divas, which hopefully is a permanent name change. This is called the first title ever, even though the Women's Title existed less than eight years ago. Still though it gets rid of that butterfly thing so it's a step up.

Pre-Show: Usos vs. Dudley Boyz



This is over the Dudleyz not wanting to use tables anymore and trying to protect their legacies as a great team who don't need weapons. The Dudleyz jump the twins to start with D-Von cranking on Jimmy's neck and taking his head off with a clothesline. Bubba comes in to shout about beating up the Usos' dad Rikishi, which Lawler calls a history lesson.

There are the dancing punches but Jimmy superkicks him down, setting up the hot tag to Jimmy. The Dudleyz beat him down too and get in What's Up, only to have a double superkick break up the table grab. The reverse 3D gets two but Jimmy breaks up the 3D with a superkick. Another good looking superkick is enough to put D-Von away at 5:18.

**Rating:** C-. This was fine but it didn't have anywhere near enough time to mean anything. The Usos vs. the Dudleyz should be a very solid match but you can only get so far on five minutes. That being said, neither team has that much of an upside at this point and I really don't need to see them fight again, especially after this only decent effort.

Post match the Dudleyz get the tables, only to get superkicked again to set up double Superfly Splashes through the tables. The fans are NOT happy with that one.

It's finally time for the regular show with the crowd mostly filled in. That's such an amazing visual as the people just keep going and going.

Pop band Fifth Harmony sings a very nice America the Beautiful.

The opening video shows the Madison Square Garden microphone dropping to signify the start of a legend. Over the years this led to a group of legends such as giants, warriors and the dead rising. That brings us to the question of who becomes the next legend. This switches into a standard video about people rising up tonight to become legends in the usually awesome Wrestlemania style. Apparently this was narrated by Kelsey Grammer.

The camera pans around the stadium and that is just a sea of humanity.

Intercontinental Title: Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Miz vs. Zack Ryder vs. Stardust vs. Sin Cara

Owens is defending and this is a ladder match. This started as Owens vs. Zayn but Ziggler and Miz got involved for no worthy reason. Then Owens insulted Stephanie McMahon and you just can't do that so she added the other three because she felt like it, and that of course trumps anything involving logic or storytelling. Stardust has Dusty inspired polka dots on his gear to make this feel special.

Everyone but Owens bails to the floor to start so it's time to pose, only to have Zayn come in with a ladder for the big showdown.

Ziggler hits Sami in the back with another ladder to take over before slamming Cara onto the ladder for good measure. The ring is cleared out and it's Miz climbing up but for some reason he doesn't open it all the way, allowing Sami and Dolph to make the save.

Owens comes back in and backdrops Zayn onto the ladder before shouting at him to go back to NXT. Ryder and Ziggler go up but get shoved down into the ropes for the save. Everyone winds up on the floor (I'm barely skipping anything in between these spots but that's the case in most multi-man ladder matches.) and Zayn dives through the ladder for the big crash. Sami is right up with the diving DDT over the bottom rope to take out Owens for a huge reaction.

Cara gets back in and tries to go up, only to have Sami shove the ladder over, only to have Cara land on the top rope and flip dive onto everyone else. Ziggler starts busting out superkicks, including tuning up the band for one on Ryder. Owens is too smart enough for that though and it's a double superkick to put both guys down. Now Stardust pulls out a polka dot ladder for a DUSTY chant and the Terry Funk helicopter spot until Miz breaks it up and hits the Skull Crushing Finale onto said ladder.

Owens will have nothing to do with the goofy ladder but has to block the Helluva Kick. A frog splash onto Zayn onto a bridged ladder have both guys down. Owens is up first though and it's a Pop Up Powerbomb to drop Miz. Ryder sends Kevin into the ladder and hits a big old

elbow drop off the ladder onto Miz for a huge crash.

That's not enough to get the belt though as Ziggler runs up the ladder for a faceplant off the top to put himself and Ryder down. It's even worse than that though as Ziggler comes up limping, allowing Owens to powerbomb him off the ladder. Stardust and Owens come back in and it's Stardust being knocked onto a ladder bridged between the apron and the ring.

After kicking Zayn away, Cara dives through Stardust and through the ladder for a spot we've seen way too many times but still works due to the carnage. Owens and Zayn go up top for the slugout on the ladder before falling down, only to have Zayn grab a half and half suplex (half nelson/half tiger) onto the ladder. Miz climbs up but takes forever to pull down the belt, allowing Ryder to shove him off and pull down the title at 15:23.

**Rating:** B. This was your usually good ladder match but there was a bit too much going on. In other words, there were too many people in the match at the same time and it dragged things down. Ryder winning was a good way to pop the crowd at first but it's pretty clear that this was supposed to be Neville. Even after the injury though, it certainly was nice of WWE to add even more people to this to make sure it was as messy as possible. Then again it's a total spot fest and that's all anyone was expecting it to be. Good choice for an opener at least.

Zack's dad comes in to help celebrate. Cole says that's Ryder's big moment after nearly ten years of futility. That would include a Tag Team Title and the US Title so well done on making your own belts sound worthless.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho. Styles debuted back in January and was immediately cheered by the fans. He then went on to defeat Jericho on Raw, setting up a series of matches between the two. They then formed a tag team but lost in their shot at the Tag Team Titles. Jericho snapped and turned heel on AJ, setting up their fourth match here.

Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles

They lock up around the ropes to start as the fans are split on who to cheer for. AJ nips up into a headscissors and Jericho throws a chair around in frustration. Back in and they slug it out but Jericho avoids the drop down into the dropkick by holding the ropes. That's fine with AJ as he clotheslines Jericho outside but dives into a dropkick.

Now we get into the meat of the match as Jericho slows things down and stomps away before putting on a chinlock. That's quite heelish of him. A dragon sleeper is as well but AJ pops up and does his striking sequence, capped off by a dropkick. Jericho grabs the Walls but AJ is quickly in the ropes and back up with an elbow to the face. AJ goes up top and fights off a superplex attempt, setting up a huge super gordbuster to put both guys down. Now the Walls go on full but AJ crawls through the legs and grabs the calf Crusher to a fairly strong reaction.

That's escaped as well so AJ tries and failed at both finishers, only to walk into the Codebreaker for a delayed two. Nice job of protecting the finisher there, even though that concept stopped mattering years ago in WWE. A Tesshocker gets two for AJ so he grabs a rollup, only to flip backwards into the Styles Clash for two more (ROAR! THEY TOTALLY KILLED THE STYLES CLASH!!! EVERY TIME SOMEONE KICKS OUT OF A FINISHER IT CAN NEVER BE USED AGAIN!!! ROAR I SAY! Typical response I've seen to that near fall and as usual, wrestling fans need to calm down because it means nothing.).

The Lionsault hits knees so AJ gets in the springboard 450 for two. That means it's time for the Phenomenal Forearm (which is his finisher now, even though people have to keep raving over the Styles Clash, which isn't even all that great of a move) but Jericho counters into the Codebreaker for the pin at 17:10.

**Rating:** B. As in bamboozled, which I am over that ending. It was a solid wrestling match going into that last bit and then Jericho won. Why in the world would you have Jericho, who is older and nowhere near what he was before, beat a hot act like Styles here? The match was good but this needed to be the finale of the feud with AJ taking

the final win but instead Jericho gets the pin. I really do not get this and I haven't seen anyone else who has either.

Some celebrities are here.

Maria Menunos is in the back with Zack Ryder, who says he can retire now because this is the match of his life. He talks about meeting Razor Ramon when he was a kid and getting to hold Ramon's Intercontinental Title. Tonight they're taking a new picture but this time it's going to be Razor holding HIS title. That's a great line, though I can't imagine Ryder holding the title long.

#### New Day vs. League of Nations

Non-title and non-handicap due to non-Barrett, despite it being a handicap match on the pre-show. None of that matters though as New Day comes out of a giant box of Booty's dressed as Super Saiyans from Dragon Ball Z. Rusev is now in trunks instead of shorts and the look doesn't work as well. There isn't much of a story here other than New Day insulted the League a month or so ago and they've feuded ever since. No reason has been given for why this isn't a title match and I doubt one is ever coming.

Kofi cross bodies Sheamus down to start as Cole says New Day is like the Freebirds. Just...no Michael. Like....really no. Sheamus easily punches Woods down and it's off to Del Rio as JBL compares the League to the Horsemen. EVEN MORE NO JBL! Woods gets in a discus forearm to put Alberto down but the running enziguri allows for the tag off to Sheamus.

That means it's time for the forearms to the chest to the beat of NEW DAY ROCKS. Well to be fair everything else is done to that beat anymore. Woods finally sends Del Rio out to the floor but Sheamus is smart enough to break up the tag attempt. The other partners get in a brawl so Xavier DDTs Sheamus and makes the hot tag to Kofi.

Everything breaks down with Kingston cleaning house, only to have Rusev kick him in the head to break it up. Big E. suplexes Rusev over the apron so E. can spear all three members through the apron for a huge crash. Rusev laying on his back with his eyes open takes

this up a step. A top rope double stomp gets two on Sheamus as Del Rio kicks away at Kofi. The double stomp drives Kingston into the floor (and it looks stupid outside too), leaving Barrett to Bull Hammer Woods into the Brogue Kick for the pin at 10:03.

**Rating:** C-. This is the point where Wrestlemania goes flying off the cliff, leaving us with the hope that it can hang on by its fingertips. New Day is quite possibly the most popular act in wrestling but for some reason they're jobbing to the heatless wonders. Having AJ lose was one thing but for the life of me I have no idea what they were thinking here. New Day gets the big entrance and then they just lose? That's the best they've got? The match was acceptable enough but the booking just does not make sense.

Post match Barrett says no three men can beat then so here are Shawn Michaels, Mick Foley and Steve Austin (Who just doesn't fit here. Foley and Michaels are big names but they're nowhere near Austin in any regard. A third legend would have worked better, though I'm not sure who you would bring in here.) to easily clean house. New Day comes in post beatdown and tries to get the three of them to dance. Michaels is with it of course and Foley has a Dude Love flashback, leaving us with Austin. This goes as badly as you would expect until he dances just a bit, only to Stun Woods a few seconds later. Much beer is consumed.

This was called a burial of the League and I really don't know where to start with explaining why this is absurd. To begin with, it's the League of Nations. How far do they have to be put down to bury them? Second, those are three of the biggest names of all time coming in fresh to beat up a team that just had a match. This was a one off moment to give the fans something to cheer for and it's the highest profile thing the League has ever done. Stop overthinking this stuff every now and then and just enjoy a fun moment.

Ad for upcoming Network shows.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. Dean Ambrose which is the latest in a series of challengers trying to fight Brock without much of a continuing story. In this case, Lesnar was involved in the triple

threat at Fastlane where Reigns pinned Ambrose, setting up this match here so Dean can prove that Brock can't hurt him. It's also a street fight to give Dean a realistic (work with me here) chance.

#### Brock Lesnar vs. Dean Ambrose

Heyman, seemingly taken aback by the size of the crowd, handles Brock's introduction for a nice touch. Brock drives him into the corner to start as is his traditional custom. We get the first suplex, which puts a big 1 on the huge video screens above the ring, which would continue counting throughout the match. We're already at #3 and it's all Brock so far. Dean grabs a kendo stick for some shots but Brock knees him away and hits two more Germans.

The fans are split on who to cheer for as Lesnar picks up the stick (JBL: "This is something you would see in Kilimanjaro." Sure JBL. Sure.) before throwing it away. There's another suplex before Brock stomps him down even more. Somehow this turns into a discussion of ice cubes in Puerto Rico because JBL and Byron can't stop having their stupid arguments.

Brock stands on the stick so Dean can't pick it up, followed by suplex number eight. Some forearms just tick Brock off even more, setting up number nine. Now Brock offers Dean a chance to come get the stick but Brock stands on it again, allowing Dean to hit him low for a hope spot. It never ceases to amuse me that a low blow is the only thing that can really hurt Brock.

Dean finds the chainsaw from Terry Funk which of course doesn't work because this is wrestling and not a slasher movie. Suplex number ten sends Dean flying on the floor, followed by a belly to belly superplex for number eleven. Dean finally gets in a fire extinguisher blast and some weak chair shots, including a dropkick to drive the chair into Lesnar.

The chair elbow drop gets two but Dean opts to throw in a bunch of chairs instead of, you know, hitting Brock with the one he has. The stupid delay allows Brock to suplex Dean over the chairs but the F5 is countered into a DDT (not) onto the chairs for two. Now it's time for the baseball bat wrapped in barbed wire but the swing misses (of

course), allowing Brock to F5 him onto the chairs for the pin at 13:06.

**Rating:** D+. The more I think about this match the less I like it. This was just a step above a squash as Lesnar never felt like he was in any danger whatsoever and made Dean look like a very second class talent by comparison. I'm really not sure what the point of these Brock matches are supposed to be these days as he's just a monster with no purpose other than coming in for the occasional squash. They don't lead anywhere and are just standalone matches so why is this supposed to be interesting? At least make Brock sweat or something because there was never any drama here.

Flair and Zack Ryder have a WOO off but it turns out to be a Snickers commercial where Ryder takes a bite and turns into Charlotte. So wait: Charlotte is the Intercontinental Champion?

Hall of Fame recap.

We get the Hall of Fame class presentation with Godfather (limited reaction but positive), Stan Hansen (about the same), Big Boss Man (better reaction), Jacqueline (surprisingly decent cheering), Joan Lunden (nothing of note), the Freebirds (roar), Snoop Dogg (reaction was there) and of course Sting with the full entrance and a roar. That's a solid class but Godfather looks so out of place.

We see Lita debuting the Women's Title earlier tonight.

The recap video for the Women's Title match is rather cool as it has a theme of searching for things on the WWE Network, showing the history of the women's division back in the day, which brought us here to the Divas Revolution. You have Charlotte defending against her former Four Horsewomen partners Becky Lynch, who Charlotte has never defeated and Sasha Banks, who no one has ever beaten. There's a chance that this could steal the show if they let it be an NXT style match.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch

Charlotte, in a robe made from the robe Ric wore in his retirement match, has her dad with her. Sasha, the overwhelming crowd favorite



is in Eddie Guerrero style gear here and is introduced by her cousin Snoop Dogg with a custom rap. Charlotte gets chopped down to start but the challengers start trading near falls instead of following up. A nice pinfall reversal sequence ensues until Becky is sent outside, leaving the fans to cheer for Sasha as she stares Charlotte down. An Eddie style armdrag out of the corner sets up the dance but Becky is back in. They botch what was supposed to be a Sasha sunset flip to make Becky suplex Charlotte (hard spot to be fair) so the champ goes outside for a bit. That goes nowhere so Charlotte takes Sasha's place, only to eat a reverse DDT for two. Charlotte rams Becky's head into the mat a few times before going in on the knee.

Sasha comes back in but can't get the double knees in the corner. Instead it's Becky slapping an armbar on Charlotte until Sasha makes the save, only to have Charlotte send her outside and slap the Figure Eight on Becky. This brings Sasha back in with a frog splash for the save and a nice ovation.

Becky comes back in to suplex Sasha but gets kneed in the chest, only to have her send Sasha through the ropes for a flip dive (Which seemed to be a botch as it looked like her foot caught the top rope.) to take out Charlotte. Becky dives onto Ric for no good reason but the fans lose their minds at the old man getting dropped.

Charlotte is up first and moonsaults down onto both challengers to really get the crowd into it. The announcers are really trying to push this as the dawning of a new era and while I don't know if I'd go that far, it's definitely awesome so far. Back in and a double Natural Selection gets two each for Charlotte but Sasha winds up on her shoulders, followed by a missile dropkick from Becky.

The Disarm-Her has Charlotte in trouble but Sasha comes over with the Bank Statement, only to have Charlotte put Sasha in the Figure Four (not Eight). That's turned over as well but Charlotte reverses the reversal into the Figure Eight. Of course that's broken up by Becky and all three are down. Charlotte chops both of them from their knees so they pound her down, only to have Becky and Sasha punch each other in the face.

A wicked spear cuts Sasha in half though and Charlotte goes up. That quickly backfires as well though as Sasha gets up, allowing Becky to tie her in the Tree of Woe. A superplex sends Charlotte flying but Sasha gets Becky (and her BADLY bruised eye) in the Bank Statement. Charlotte is right back in for the save though and the Figure Eight makes Becky tap at 16:03 while Flair holds Sasha back.

**Rating:** B+. They were rocking here and a blown spot or two less would have made this a classic. Above all else this felt like an NXT women's match instead of a main roster Divas match, which is exactly what the point of this was supposed to be. Hopefully this becomes the focal point of the division instead of all the lame action you get more often than not.

The big criticism here is simple though: it should have been Sasha. If there has ever been a moment perfectly set up for a title change, it was right here. Sasha had the custom entrance, the special tights and the crowd entirely behind her....and it's Flair interfering to keep the title on Charlotte, just like it always is. I don't get this mentality of setting something up for down the road when you're at Wrestlemania. It didn't make sense when Lawler lost to Cole and it doesn't make sense here. Great match though.

Charlotte gets a ton of pyro, including a series of fireworks outside the stadium. That really did make it feel like a bigger moment, just like it should be.

The Cell is lowered.

We recap Shane vs. Undertaker and I still get lost in this whole thing. So Shane apparently had dirt on Vince and kept holding it over his head so Shane tried to get control of Raw. Vince agreed to put Raw up in exchange for whatever proof Shane had of what Vince did (the specifics of which have still not been explained and likely never will be). Shane has to fight the Undertaker inside the Cell tonight and unfortunately no one gives Shane much of a chance due to his age, time away from the ring, and HIS OPPONENT IS THE UNDERTAKER. Oh and Undertaker is done at Wrestlemania if he loses just in case you thought Shane could win.

This story has been a mess from the start and it's not really clear who you're supposed to cheer for. Do you go for Shane who is up against Vince and the evil Authority (after saying how much Raw has sucked in recent years) or against Undertaker who is the legend fighting for Vince because.....well it's not really clear but in theory it's because Vince is Vince. The idea is that Shane is in WAY over his head, which he certainly is, making this whole thing a mess. To be fair though there's a good chance that Shane was supposed to be John Cena before the injury took him off the card. Unfortunately, this is the best thing we can get.

I know Shane being back has given a lot of fans a bunch of nostalgia but that doesn't mean he's capable of having a long match with anyone, let alone an old Undertaker. This has the potential to be a bunch of fun spots but having it be an actual quality match is almost completely out of the question.

#### Shane McMahon vs. Undertaker

Inside the Cell of course. Of course the entrances take forever with Shane's going long as well due to having his children (Vince's grandchildren) dance out with him as Shane dollars fall from the ceiling. As usual, this creates an issue as the bills are everywhere, including sticking to the side of the Cell. Shane throws a kick to start for no effect before they start jabbing at the air in front of each other.

They head outside with Undertaker in control and "methodically taking his time" according to Cole because he doesn't get that they mean the same thing. Back in and a single right hand puts Shane down but he back elbows Undertaker in the jaw to block a big boot. Cole follows up by saying this is a cat and mouse game, making sure to point out that Undertaker is indeed the cat.

Undertaker messes with some steps but gets caught with kicks as he comes back in, earning Shane a whip into the cage wall. The apron legdrop sets up the Last Ride for two and I'm done with this match five and a half minutes in. That move can give Undertaker World Titles and major wins but it can't beat Shane McMahon when

Undertaker has barely been touched? I just can't buy that no matter how much of an athlete Shane is.

Undertaker brings the steps in but gets caught in a long triangle choke, which would be laughed off and broken in ten seconds from any other opponent but since it's Shane it's hard to counter for some reason. Undertaker gets Shane on his back for a cover and the hold is broken, allowing Undertaker to chokeslam him onto the steps for another two.

Oh come on now. Neither of those moves are enough to put Shane away? That's what I'm supposed to buy? Based on those moves, this match shouldn't have made it ten minutes but they seem to just be starting up. Undertaker misses an elbow and hits the steps so Shane says bring it on. That's actually enough to sucker Undertaker in for a DDT onto the steps for two and the actual wrestler is WAY more out of it than he should be after one or maybe two big moves in ten minutes.

Undertaker sits up so Shane punches him in the face, earning himself a Hell's Gate. Shane somehow escapes that (as in the move that put HHH away at a Wrestlemania) for a bad Sharpshooter, with the referee telling him to take his time. Thankfully Undertaker powers out pretty easily but he can't handle Shane hitting him in the face a few times. Undertaker can take punches from BROCK LESNAR but Shane takes a few weeks of MMA training and he can punch Undertaker down?

Shane hits Coast to Coast and it's only good for two because one foot driving a trashcan into Undertaker's chest (more like stomach as the can didn't seem to make any actual contact) actually isn't enough to put him away. Shocking I know but we keep going. Shane gets up and finds boltcutters under the ring to break open part of the cage wall. Undertaker is quickly to his feet though and drives Shane through the wall and up against the German announcers' table, which really isn't a huge impact as the wall only goes a few feet before being stopped.

It's time to load up the announcers' table and Undertaker calls for the Tombstone, only to have Shane counter into a sleeper. Not a

special MMA choke, but a run of the mill sleeper. Instead of like, countering by easily flipping Shane over, Undertaker just stands there for a bit before driving both of them through the table for a good looking crash.

Shane comes up with a toolbox to knock Undertaker silly though....and Shane looks at the top of the Cell. A monitor shot to the head keeps Undertaker down and it's time to go up. Shane takes forever to finally dive off, driving himself through the table and right onto the visible crash pad.

I was genuinely scared when he was up there and seeing the pad helps a good bit as that thing is HUGE. I get that they had to have it but couldn't they find a better way to hide it? After a lot of sitting around so Shane can be checked out, Shane says bring it on. Back in and Shane pulls himself onto the steps where Undertaker tells him to bring it. The Tombstone finally puts Shane away at 30:05.

**Rating:** D. Nope. You can take the nostalgia, you can take Shane fighting for his legacy (whatever that means this year) and you can pretend that Shane can get through this with pure heart and it doesn't matter. This flat out did not work for me and it didn't work for several reasons.

First and foremost, I do not buy that Shane McMahon is a threat to the Undertaker, nor do I buy that he could kick out of a Last Ride and chokeslam onto the steps before getting out of Hell's Gate. They lost me as soon as that happened because, as has been established, Shane isn't a wrestler and therefore shouldn't be able to survive that kind of stuff. I know you can stretch a lot of the time but this was too much for me to believe.

Second, this was WAY too long at over half an hour. This went longer than Shawn vs. Undertaker inside the Cell and was the fifth longest Cell match in history. The elbow was cool (terrifying but cool) but that's not enough to warrant this match going longer than Undertaker vs. Mankind or HHH vs. Cactus Jack. This should have been cut in half and had the time given to other stuff or maybe cut off so the show isn't pushing five hours.

Third, it was barely a match. This was a bunch of stretches of Undertaker beats on Shane then misses a big move so Shane can get in some garbage stuff. That's entertaining for a little while but then it gets to be the same stuff over and over. I know Shane isn't a wrestler, but that's the problem: you need someone more capable to have a match that lasts half an hour.

Finally, there was barely any reason to have this in the Cell other than "it's a Cell match." Other than the big spot at the end, the cage was barely used and there was next to no reason for these two to hate each other. Vince decided we were having this match and they tried to work in some hatred or anger later but it never clicked. This easily could have been no holds barred or something and just had Shane dive off the stage or something but instead we had the Cell, which took even more time to get ready and hype up.

Overall it's certainly not the worst match I've ever seen for the gimmick and I was entertained at times but it was just too long with too many leaps in realism. This is a match where Shane should have brought people in to help him and maybe set something up for Undertaker later.

Instead it was like when Vince and Shane fought DX with no help: no one believes it because the wrestler is just too good for the businessman who wrestles on occasion. This could have worked at about fifteen minutes but it was dragging at twelve and only came close to picking up near the end. I wasn't a fan here and it was worse on a second viewing.

Shane is wheeled out on a stretcher to eat up even more time. He throws a thumbs up and pounds his chest for the crowd.

Here's the pre-show panel while the ring is cleaned up.

#### Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Fandango, Damien Sandow, Shaquille O'Neal, Big Show, Viktor, Diamond Dallas Page, Konnor, Tatanka, Jack Swagger, R-Truth, Goldust, Baron Corbin, Curtis Axel, Adam Rose, Heath Slater, Tyler Breeze, Mark Henry, Bo Dallas, Darren Young, Kane

Page was a cool surprise with the music getting a strong pop. Put the guy in the Hall of Fame already. Tatanka was at Axxess earlier in the day but I have no idea why he's in this. O'Neal was a surprise, even though his TapOut graphic flashed during Big Show's entrance. Show and Shaq have the staredown but Kane interrupts it, only to have everyone get knocked down to the floor so we can have the real showdown.

Fandango tries to dance but gets tossed by the giants. Shaq eliminates Sandow as well before it's time for the big choke off, only to have everyone come in and eliminate Shaq and Show. The match turns into a regular battle royal now, minus all of the interest because....well look at the lineup. Page Diamond Cuts Viktor for an easy elimination but Konor actually gets rid of the yoga guy.

Truth dumps Konor and it's time for the Tatanka warpath. That lasts as long as you would expect it to before Corbin dumps Tatanka. Kane gets rid of Swagger and it's time for the Social Outcasts to clean house, including eliminating Truth. Goldust follows Truth to the floor and it's time for the B0 TRAIN!

Kane quickly derails it (duh) and Corbin cuts off the other exit. Axel and Rose are quickly out but Kane chokeslams Corbin. Henry gets back in and easily throws out Slater. Breeze follows them as the ring is suddenly mostly empty. Kane and Young (now there's a pair) eliminates Henry. Darren celebrates and gets dumped at the same time as Dallas, only to have Corbin throw Kane out for the BIG surprise win at 9:41.

**Rating:** D. The match sucked but Corbin winning was the perfect call. It instantly gives him a path to running up the main roster and that's all this was supposed to be. Kane being the last man out is fine but I'm really annoyed that the battle royal has taken such a fall in the last two years. It's now just another battle royal with lower card and midcard goons, but at least two of the first three winners have been people in need of a push.

Wrestlemania XXXIII will be in Orlando.

Here are the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders for a completely

unnecessary (yet very visually appealing) dance number. Yeah it's just an excuse to have good looking women in glorified swimsuits but here's the Rock to spice things up. Oh wait he can't walk through the cheerleader tunnel yet because.....he's got a flamethrower. He plays with it a bit before lighting up a big ROCK sign, which is put out a few moments later.

Rock FINALLY comes down to the ring, making sure to show off the bicep to one of the cheerleaders along the way. A mere SEVEN AND A HALF MINUTES after the cheerleaders came out, Rock says his first word. Rock talks about seeing smiling faces on all four sides of the stadium, which means there are going to be a lot of Wrestlemania babies in nine months. He talks about how awesome it is to be here with the millions (which he keeps saying) before FINALLY getting to the point: announcing the new Wrestlemania attendance record. Rock says it's about to get good....and we've got Wyatts.

Seeing the fireflies in the stadium really was one of the coolest things I got to see all night and was definitely worth seeing in person. Bray introduces himself and his brothers before saying he chose Rock. See, Rock represents success, greatness and a lie. This moment doesn't belong to the Rock or to the people but to Bray Wyatt himself. Rock looks a bit nervous but immediately starts mocking Bray for saying he would eviscerate Rock right now. "You come out here and talk like you've been hitting the bong for about eight days straight jack."

Rowan's parents are clearly related and Strowman looks like he's been breast fed since he was 26 years old. As for Bray though, Rock has had his eye on him since Bray got to the WWE. Bray has the ability and the charisma (nice applause for that) and when his music hit, 100,000 people put their phones in the air. Then Bray said he wanted to eviscerate the Rock but that's knocking on a door that he doesn't want answered. Bray can say he's the eater of worlds but Rock thinks he's just the eater of Hot Pockets.

Rock is wrong though because Bray is here to kick a door down because he has no idea who he's fooling with right now. There goes



the shirt but Rock doesn't think we're going to have a Wrestlemania fight. No, we're going to have a Wrestlemania MATCH. We've got a referee out here and there go the tear away pants. This is actually happening and the fans are WAY into it.

### The Rock vs. Erick Rowan

Bell, Rock Bottom, six seconds. Well it was indeed a match and a Wrestlemania record.

The Wyatts surround the ring....and here's John Cena for the save. Rowan and Strowman take finishers and it's a spinebuster into the Rock Bottom for Bray. Rock grabs a mic, says welcome back to Cena, and wraps it up after twenty eight minutes, or longer than anything all night but the Cell.

Oh and no this wasn't a burial of the Wyatts. This was the Wyatts interacting with one of the biggest stars of all time and having him beat their lackey whose entire job is to take the fall in losses. The segment is going to set up the Wyatts turning face and maybe going somewhere for a change. Also it was Rock praising Bray, which of course buries him like it buried Rusev back in the day, before Rusev won the US Title and then beat John Cena on pay per view. You know, after crawling out of the grave that Rock put him in and all that. This was fine for the Wyatts and not a burial. Well other than being WAY too long of course.

Long recap of Roman Reigns vs. HHH, which is basically HHH wanting to hold Reigns down because Reigns didn't want to join the Authority. This turned into a really watered down story with HHH wanting to prove that he still had it with the feud dying more and more every week. Reigns has been more aggressive lately which has made things better, but this is still just a step above a disaster coming in.

We see a bunch of men with white heads and metal plates over their faces. As in thousands of them, all standing in a huge group. Stephanie is shown in the HHH skull mask standing in front of a throne looking like a witch. She wants us to rise in their presence because we all exist to serve them. They are the leaders and the

power because they own all of us. After tonight, all hope will be gone because only HHH can stand in the coliseum of the immortals. Here's a quick translation: "WE'RE HEELS! BOO US AND NOT REIGNS!"

#### WWE World Title: Roman Reigns vs. HHH

HHH comes to the ring flanked by an army of the white headed guys (all from NXT in theory), all carrying WWE Titles. Reigns is loudly booed but it's not quite as bad as I was expecting. HHH grabs a headlock to start and slaps Reigns in the back of the head. Remember that they hate each other and keep wanting to hurt the other as much as possible.

Reigns gets sent over the top and out to the floor before HHH starts in on his arm. There's a right hand to send HHH into the corner and Reigns throws in a crotch chop. That earns HHH a whip across the ring but he avoids a charge and hits Reigns in the back of the head. Some pretty loud spot calling sets up a knee to the back of the head, followed by a stiff punch to Roman's face.

Reigns comes back with the running clothesline and apron boot, only to have Stephanie offer a distraction so HHH can get in a low blow. I guess it's not enough that she takes everyone's balls but now she's helping get her husband some balls too. A slugout goes to Reigns but a spinebuster gives HHH two. They head outside with Reigns being rammed face first into the table and then being thrown over it for good measure.

You can hear the fans groaning at the slow pace, especially over six hours into the evening. Back in and a middle rope knee gets two for the champ but he tries again and gets punched out of the air. A Samoan drop gets two and has Stephanie panicking but HHH avoids the Superman punch by rolling to the outside. This is dragging BADLY here as HHH still can't work an epic style match to save his life.

Reigns sends him into the steps and followed with a huge spear through the barricade. Good thing the security guards had already cleared out that part of the crowd. Reigns' left arm is hanging as they get back inside, only to have the Superman punch countered into an armbar because this hasn't gone long enough yet.

Reigns rolls out of another armbar and lifts HHH up into the sitout powerbomb for two as this just keeps going. HHH is right back with the cross armbreaker but Reigns counters exactly the same way. The spear is blocked and HHH tries a Pedigree, which is quickly countered with a backdrop over the top. Back in and the spear gets two as Stephanie pulls the referee out.

That means another spear but Stephanie takes it instead....and suddenly Reigns is as popular as free beer in a frat house. I mean the place is suddenly WAY into him all for finally giving Stephanie what she had coming to her. HHH is livid and gets two off a Pedigree. The Superman punch connects but the spear eats knee. Stephanie hands him the sledgehammer but it's another Superman punch and the spear for the title at 27:11.

**Rating:** D. HHH needs to stop trying to go big because he just can't pull it off. I don't know how else to put it but he just can't do it. This was yet another match that didn't fit the story in the slightest as it was more like HHH was trying to outsmart Reigns instead of beating on each other like two men out for blood. It was a boring match and a really weak way to wrap up this show. The spear to Stephanie was PERFECT though and something long overdue. I don't need her to get beaten up every single week or anything but taking a bump every now and then isn't going to kill her or her all important heat.

Reigns celebrates a lot.

A five minute highlight package ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. We'll get to the elephant in the stadium later and start off by saying there's a lot of good stuff on here. The wrestling is strong almost throughout save for the double main event with the women's match and the ladder match standing out as very entertaining stuff. If the two big matches hadn't been so horrible, this show would shoot up the charts.

Then there's the booking. Oh yes then there's the booking. From Ryder (who was clearly supposed to be Neville) winning the title after winning two matches on Raw in a year to AJ and New Day losing

to Dean practically getting squashed to Sasha not winning, it was a big night for the heels with very little to cheer for. Just a bad night of decision making which seemed to be nothing more than a way to get on the fans' nerves.

However, that leaves us with the big problem: counting the pre-show, this was just under seven hours long, or TRIPLE what Takeover:

Dallas was. I get that Wrestlemania is bigger than anything all year but they went WAY too far this year. Looking back at the show, the Cell could have been cut in half, Rock's promo could have lost five to ten minutes and the main event could have been ten minutes shorter. That's not much but it gets you down over half an hour, which is getting closer to manageable.

That's where the show loses it for me and for most people. If you can get this down to under six hours (counting the pre-show, which could have been chopped down too), you have a much better show. If you can fix the booking issues (which could have been mostly solved by having AJ and New Day win), this show is instantly higher up on the list of great shows.

Overall, Wrestlemania was really starting to feel like a chore near the end. You shouldn't be sitting there thinking "we've got this and this left to get through and then we can leave". At a show like this, or really any show actually, you should be excitedly waiting for the main event. However, it really doesn't matter what that match is when it's six hours into a show. It's just too long and it really hurt things.

There's a lot of good on this show and the surprises really helped it out, but in any wrestling show you can reach a point where the decisions being made outweigh anything that can go on in the ring. So many things at the show held back the good stuff and there wasn't much of a way around that, which is why this show fell as far as it did. It's an entertaining show, but it really needs a good shaking while someone pulls back on the booker's reins.

## Results

Zack Ryder b. Kevin Owens, Miz, Dolph Ziggler, Sami Zayn, Stardust

and Sin Cara – Ryder pulled down the title

Chris Jericho b. AJ Styles – Codebreaker

League of Nations b. New Day – Brogue Kick to Woods

Brock Lesnar b. Dean Ambrose – F5 onto a pile of chairs

Charlotte b. Becky Lynch and Sasha Banks – Figure Eight to Lynch

Undertaker b. Shane McMahon – Tombstone

Baron Corbin won the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal last eliminating Kane

The Rock b. Erick Rowan – Rock Bottom

Roman Reigns b. HHH – Spear

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## Quick Wrestlemania Notes

We're home and exhausted from a VERY long show, which was an absolute blast live. I'll have a more in depth discussion of the show tomorrow but here are some highlights in no order.

1. The floor was literally shaking for Rock. I've never felt that before.
2. Reigns went from villain to hero(ish) by spearing Stephanie. Who knew it was that simple?

3. The video screen was WEIRD. The big screen that most people watched on (the 80 yard long one) kept going to three mini screens and then did things like starting a WOO whenever Charlotte went for the Figure Eight and keeping a count of Brock's suplexes (picture coming later).
  4. That stadium is one of the most impressive things I've ever seen. It really has to be seen to be believed.
  5. Really fun show live, though I don't think it topped XXX.
  6. Austin's pop was amazing and I had to hold my wife back when Shawn came out.
  7. I'd love to hear their explanation for the show going so long. It couldn't have been planned to last that long, or at least not that I heard.
  8. I was genuinely scared for Shane when he was on top of that Cell. I don't like feeling like that and I shouldn't at a wrestling show.
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## Wrestlemania XXXII

I'll be at the show tonight so use this to discuss the show if you like. I'll be back tonight (hopefully not too late) with a post about anything major that happens. Full reviews of Smackdown (yeah I know), NXT, Wrestlemania and then Raw later this week, probably once we get home.

KB

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# Wrestlemania XXXII Preview: Overall Thoughts

And false hope.

Overall, Wrestlemania is going to be.....interesting. The problems that we've been going over for months are still around and the double main event has the potential to be anywhere from a pleasant surprise to an all time mess. This is a show that is being held together by super glue and duct tape at this point and there's a very real chance that it's all going to come falling apart at the seams from the moment the show starts. I'm not sure what all we can expect from it though there's certainly potential for this to be good.

That being said, I don't think they can pull off last year all over again. Last year was a borderline miracle with WWE pulling off one of the biggest surprises of all time with a great show that looked horrible on paper. I don't think this one is quite that bad but it certainly could fall apart if they don't treat things properly.

At the end of the day though, it's Wrestlemania. There's going to be something good and memorable (probably New Day's entrance) and we're getting Undertaker in the Cell, possibly in his last match. I don't think we're going to see the greatest show of all time but that attendance record (which you know is coming down) is going to be something special to see. I'm still excited to go again and I'm going to have a good time no matter what because, no matter how bad it might look, this is Wrestlemania. That makes it a big deal and there's no way it's not going to be fun.

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